

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

HEARING #18-11701      JANUARY 9, 2018      6:00 P.M.

DOCKET NO. 2017-228-S

APPLICATION OF PALMETTO UTILITIES, INC. — Application for Adjustment of Rates  
and Charges for Customers in the Palmetto Utilities and Palmetto of Richland County  
Service Areas

TRANSCRIPT OF ALLOWABLE  
PROCEEDINGS

VOLUME 1

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Swain E. WHITFIELD,  
*Chairman*; Comer H. 'Randy' RANDALL, *Vice Chairman*;  
and COMMISSIONERS John E. 'Butch' HOWARD, Elliott  
F. ELAM, Jr., Elizabeth B. 'Lib' FLEMING, Robert T.  
'Bob' BOCKMAN, and G. O'Neal HAMILTON

ADVISOR TO COMMISSION: B. Randall Dong, Esq.  
Legal Advisory Staff

STAFF: Jocelyn G. Boyd, Chief Clerk/Administrator, James  
Spearman, Ph.D., Executive Assistant to Commissioners; William O.  
Richardson and John Powers, Technical Advisory Staff; Jo Elizabeth  
M. Wheat, CVR-CM/M-GNSC, Court Reporter; and Afton Ellison and  
Calvin Woods, Hearing Room Assistants

APPEARANCES:

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MUSTIAN, ESQUIRE**, representing PALMETTO UTILITIES,  
INC., APPLICANT

**JEFFREY M. NELSON, ESQUIRE**, and **JENNY R.  
PITTMAN, ESQUIRE**, representing the SOUTH CAROLINA  
OFFICE OF REGULATORY STAFF

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**I N D E X**

|   | <b>PAGE</b> |
|---|-------------|
| <b><u>OPENING/PRELIMINARY MATTERS</u></b> .....                   | 5-14        |
| <i>Mr. Nelson</i> .....   | 5           |
| Hearing Exhibit No. 1 request to mark/receive .....               | 19          |
| [Sign-In Sheets] marked/received in evidence .....                | 94          |
| <i>Mr. Hoefer</i> .....   | 13          |
| <b><u>1. TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS FRANKLIN WARD</u></b> .....  | 15          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....                                      | 18          |
| <b><u>2. TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS MARGARET HOUCK</u></b> ..... | 18          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Hoefer .....                             | 20          |
| Examination by Commissioner Fleming .....                         | 21          |
| Examination by Chairman Whitfield .....                           | 23          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....                                      | 24          |
| <b><u>3. TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS SAM SMITH</u></b> .....      | 24          |
| Examination by Commissioner Howard .....                          | 26          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....                                      | 26          |
| <b><u>4. TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS PAUL JOLIN</u></b> .....     | 27          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Hoefer .....                             | 27          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....                                      | 28          |
| <b><u>5. TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS TERESA RATLIFF</u></b> ..... | 29          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Nelson .....                             | 30          |
| Examination by Commissioner Fleming .....                         | 31          |
| Examination by Commissioner Howard .....                          | 31          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....                                      | 32          |
| <b><u>6. TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS RONNIE JUSTICE</u></b> ..... | 32          |
| Examination by Chairman Whitfield .....                           | 34          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....                                      | 34          |
| <b><u>7. TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS RONDA REYNOLDS</u></b> ..... | 35          |
| Examination by Chairman Whitfield .....                           | 38          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....                                      | 39          |
| <b><u>8. TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS JOEL BARNES</u></b> .....    | 39          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....                                      | 43          |

|   | <b>PAGE</b> |
|---|-------------|
| <b>9. <u>TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS THOMAS JUCHUM</u></b> .....    | 43          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Hoefer .....                               | 46          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Nelson .....                               | 46          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....  | 47          |
| <b>10. <u>TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS GARY WILHELM</u></b> .....    | 47          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....  | 49          |
| <b>11. <u>TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS HARRY MILEY</u></b> .....     | 49          |
| Examination by Commissioner Howard .....                            | 51          |
| Examination by Commissioner Fleming .....                           | 52          |
| Examination by Chairman Whitfield .....                             | 53          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....  | 54          |
| <b>12. <u>TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS JAMES ABRAHAM</u></b> .....   | 54          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Nelson .....                               | 55          |
| Examination by Chairman Whitfield .....                             | 55          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....  | 56          |
| <b>13. <u>TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS SARA BASKINS</u></b> .....    | 56          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Hoefer .....                               | 58          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....  | 58          |
| <b>14. <u>TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS GLORIA KING</u></b> .....     | 59          |
| Examination by Commissioner Fleming .....                           | 61          |
| Examination by Commissioner Howard .....                            | 63          |
| Examination by Chairman Whitfield .....                             | 64          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....  | 65          |
| <b>15. <u>TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS PHILLIP MARTIN</u></b> .....  | 68          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Hoefer .....                               | 69          |
| Examination by Chairman Whitfield .....                             | 68          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....  | 68          |
| <b>16. <u>TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS PATRICK O'BRIEN</u></b> ..... | 68          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Hoefer .....                               | 69          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....  | 70          |
| <b>17. <u>TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS STACY PARISH</u></b> .....    | 70          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Hoefer .....                               | 73          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Nelson .....                               | 74          |
| Examination by Commissioner Fleming .....                           | 74          |
| Examination by Commissioner Howard .....                            | 76          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....  | 76          |

|  | <b>PAGE</b> |
|--|-------------|
| <b>18. <u>TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS CPT. BAKARI PRIOLEAU</u></b> ..... | 76          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Hoefer .....                                    | 79          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....   | 82          |
| <b>19. <u>TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS REGINARL RANDOLPH</u></b> .....    | 83          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....   | 86          |
| <b>20. <u>TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC WITNESS PARISH BROWN</u></b> .....         | 86          |
| Cross Examination by Mr. Hoefer .....                                    | 90          |
| Examination by Commissioner Fleming .....                                | 91          |
| <i>Witness excused</i> .....   | 92          |
| <b><u>CLOSING MATTERS</u></b> .....                                      | 92          |
| <b><u>REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE</u></b> .....                               | 95          |

P R O C E E D I N G S

**CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Please be seated.

I'll call this hearing to order and ask that our attorney, Mr. Dong, read the docket.

**MR. DONG:** This is the public night hearing for the Application of Palmetto Utilities, Inc., for an adjustment of rates and charges for customers in the Palmetto Utilities and Palmetto of Richland County service areas, in Docket No. 2017-228-S.

**CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Dong.

I'll now call on the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff – Mr. Nelson, I guess you're the designee tonight – to give us some instructions and let all the members of the public know what to expect, and lay some ground rules out for us tonight, Mr. Nelson.

**MR. NELSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I kind of want to explain the process here a little bit for everybody and tell you how things will work here tonight.

My name is Jeff Nelson. I'm an attorney with the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff. First of all, I'd like to thank y'all for coming out tonight. We appreciate when customers,

1 consumers, are interested in coming out and talking  
2 on cases like this. So thank you for coming.

3 The Public Service Commission is hosting the  
4 hearing, and the agency that I work for, the Office  
5 of Regulatory Staff, is a different State agency  
6 from the Public Service Commission – just so y'all  
7 are aware. A lot of people kind of think that  
8 we're all the same. The Commission is charged with  
9 making the final decision on this Application, and  
10 they sit as what we call a quasi-judicial board in  
11 South Carolina; in other words, they are sitting up  
12 here as judges.

13 The Office of Regulatory Staff is charged with  
14 representing the public interest, and then making  
15 recommendations to the Commission regarding the  
16 Application that's been filed in this case.

17 The hearing here is for you, to give an  
18 opportunity to share your thoughts and comments and  
19 anything you care to say regarding the pending  
20 Application of Palmetto Utilities for the rate  
21 increase.

22 The Commission scheduled this because they  
23 understand that it's important that they hear from  
24 consumers in cases like this, and they will take  
25 what you say into consideration in making the final

1 decision in this case.

2 Now, when you speak here tonight, Ms. Wheat –  
3 sitting up here – is the court reporter. So when  
4 you come up, Ms. Wheat will be taking down  
5 everything that you say and that will become part  
6 of the official record in the case. Also, because  
7 this is all being taken down by her, please be  
8 aware when you come up, make sure that you  
9 verbalize everything. And if you're asked any  
10 questions or anything, you know, shoulder shrugs  
11 and things like that don't translate well into  
12 writing, so please make sure that you verbalize  
13 things. And when you come up, I believe the  
14 Commission is setting a three-minute limit on  
15 speaking tonight.

16 In addition to that, once you have spoken,  
17 either myself, representing the Office of  
18 Regulatory Staff, Mr. Hoefer, or Mr. Mustian, who  
19 represent Palmetto Utilities, or the Commissioners  
20 may ask you some questions. It may be to follow up  
21 or get some more information on something that  
22 you've provided. So don't take offense if you're  
23 asked questions like that, and please don't take  
24 offense if we don't ask questions, either. We just  
25 kind of want to hear from you tonight, but there

1           may be an opportunity and we may feel that there's  
2           a need to follow up with something. So once you  
3           get done testifying, we'd ask you to just please  
4           stay up there a minute until the Chairman dismisses  
5           you, so that we have the opportunity to see if  
6           somebody wants to follow up on the information  
7           you've provided.

8           Also with me here tonight – we would like to  
9           take the opportunity, if you have something you  
10          want to talk to my office about one-on-one, myself,  
11          Ms. Jenny Pittman is here with me, and she's  
12          another lawyer in my office; I also have Mr.  
13          Michael Seaman-Huynh here tonight, from our Rates  
14          Department, and Mr. Willie Morgan, from our Rates  
15          Department. Jenny and I can't talk to you while  
16          the hearing is going on, but if you can't stay  
17          through the whole thing and you want to talk to  
18          somebody from ORS, please come up and tap one of  
19          these gentlemen on the shoulder and they'll be  
20          happy to walk outside the doors, there, and talk to  
21          you and answer any concerns you might have. In  
22          addition to talking to us, the company also has  
23          representatives here tonight, and so I'm sure they  
24          would also welcome the opportunity, if you need to  
25          speak to somebody at the company, your opportunity



1 to do so would be with them while they're here  
2 tonight.

3 Now, as I said, the Commission sits as a  
4 quasi-judicial body in South Carolina, and that  
5 means that they basically have to comply with all  
6 the rules of judicial conduct, and that includes  
7 then, in the same way that if you go to testify as  
8 a witness in a criminal or a civil case as a  
9 witness, you couldn't ask the judge questions about  
10 the points of law or anything, you really can't ask  
11 the Commissioners questions. I'm sure they'd be  
12 happy to try to answer it; I'm sure they would know  
13 the information. But because of the position they  
14 sit in, they can't take and answer questions from  
15 you tonight. Again, the opportunity for you to do  
16 that is with our office and we would be more than  
17 happy to answer any questions you might have  
18 tonight.

19 Let me make sure I just didn't miss anything  
20 here. One thing also is, if you think of something  
21 later that you want to talk to us about, the Office  
22 of Regulatory Staff has a Consumer Services  
23 Division, and it's a 1-800 number. It's 1-800-922-  
24 1531, and our offices – I'll tell you that one more  
25 time. 1-800-922-1531. And our staff is available

1 to answer any questions from consumers regarding  
2 billing, customer complaints of service, or that  
3 type of thing; 8:30 to 5 every day, we have staff  
4 in the Consumer Services Division that would be  
5 happy to talk to you.

6 Thank you for your attention. I really  
7 appreciate it.

8 Mr. Chairman, I would also ask on behalf of  
9 the ORS that – we would ask for the sign-in sheets  
10 to be made a part of the record in this case from  
11 tonight's hearing. And that's all I have, Mr.  
12 Chairman.

13 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** So ordered, Mr. Nelson.  
14 Again, thank you, Mr. Nelson. And before we get  
15 started, I'm going to turn this back over to our  
16 attorney, Mr. Dong, for a few other instructions.  
17 And, again, I would just reiterate one of the  
18 things – one of the many things Mr. Nelson said is  
19 that we cannot answer your questions. We may ask  
20 you some questions. But, again, as he referenced,  
21 Act 175 prohibits the Commissioners from asking any  
22 questions. So your opportunity to ask any  
23 questions between now and the merits hearing would  
24 be with ORS, and he identified his staff here  
25 present tonight. And, again, they are a separate

1 State agency from us, housed in another building.  
2 So I would – again, any questions, I would direct  
3 them to Mr. Nelson and the staff from ORS.

4 And now, with that, Mr. Dong?

5 **MR. DONG:** As the Chairman said, my name is  
6 Randall Dong. I'm an attorney for the Public  
7 Service Commission.

8 I really only have a couple of things to add.  
9 Mr. Nelson did an excellent job of laying down  
10 everything, pretty much, that needed to be said. I  
11 would like to say that I've got a list of about,  
12 oh, 15 people who have asked to speak tonight. If  
13 you didn't sign up to speak and you decide that you  
14 do want to speak, please find a member of our staff  
15 in the back and sign up and have them bring us  
16 that, because, as you heard, the sign-up sheets  
17 will be made a part of the record and it helps us  
18 keep a better record to have people actually sign  
19 up to speak.

20 One other thing that I would say – well, two  
21 other things. One is, that I didn't hear before,  
22 was if you have cell phones, please silence them.  
23 And, so, if you hear testimony from a customer that  
24 is pretty much what you wanted to say, please feel  
25 free to, when your time comes, to say, "The

1 testimony I wanted to give has been given,” or to  
2 adopt someone else’s testimony. That will save  
3 time; that will give more people an opportunity to  
4 speak if they wish to do so.

5 That’s really about all I have.

6 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Dong, before you call  
7 the first witness, Mr. Nelson, if you would like,  
8 if you would maybe introduce some of the staff that  
9 you have here that might be with you tonight, and  
10 introduce them?

11 **MR. NELSON:** I’ve already done that, Mr.  
12 Chairman, but, again, this is Mr. Michael Seaman-  
13 Huynh –

14 **MR. MICHAEL SEAMAN-HUYNH:** [Indicating.]

15 **MR. NELSON:** – and Mr. Willie Morgan.

16 **MR. MORGAN:** [Indicating.]

17 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Okay, I somehow missed  
18 Mr. Seaman-Huynh and Mr. Morgan. I knew you  
19 introduced Ms. Pittman. I’m sorry for that. And  
20 won’t forget you two, but at least the audience got  
21 a second look at you. So, thank you for that.

22 Mr. Dong?

23 **MR. DONG:** Mr. Hoefer?

24 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** We’ll – appearance from  
25 the company. I’m sorry.

1                   **MR. HOEFER:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr.  
2                   Chairman.

3                   May it please the Commission, members of the  
4                   Commission, Mr. Chairman, I'm John Hoefer. With me  
5                   is my law partner, Ben Mustian. We represent the  
6                   Applicant, Palmetto Utilities, in this rate-relief  
7                   proceeding.

8                   At the table with me are personnel from  
9                   Palmetto Utilities who will be happy to stay after  
10                  the hearing and speak with customers: Mr. Mark  
11                  Daday, Ms. Andrena Powell-Baker, Ms. April  
12                  Braswell, and Ms. Nikia Morris, all of whom are  
13                  with Palmetto Utilities and will be glad to answer  
14                  any questions customers may have after the hearing  
15                  is concluded.

16                  Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17                  **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Hoefer.

18                  I guess if y'all will allow me – I'm a little  
19                  rusty on a night hearing. We haven't had one  
20                  lately here. So I do need to do one other thing  
21                  that we normally do at a night public hearing. I'm  
22                  going to introduce the Commissioners so the  
23                  audience will know who each Commissioner is and  
24                  where their district is.

25                  Commissioner Elam, Commissioner Elliott Elam,

1 on the far end down there [indicating] represents  
2 the Second Congressional District. Commissioner  
3 Bockman represents the Sixth District. Next to him  
4 we have Commissioner Fleming representing the  
5 Fourth District from the Upstate. And on the far  
6 end, all the way down on the far end [indicating],  
7 we have Commissioner Howard, who represents the  
8 First Congressional District, from Charleston.  
9 Next to him we have Commissioner O'Neal Hamilton,  
10 from the Seventh District, from Marlboro County.  
11 And then next to him, we have Commissioner Randy  
12 Randall representing the Third District. And I'm  
13 Swain Whitfield; I'm the Chairman, and I represent  
14 the Fifth District.

15 And I think now that we have all of our  
16 electronic devices under control, we will proceed.  
17 So if anyone managed to not turn their device off,  
18 please do so at this time, and I should've made  
19 that clear to begin with, too. So please silence  
20 or turn off any electronic devices, so that you, as  
21 public witnesses, when you speak, that our court  
22 reporter can be able to get everything you say into  
23 the record, because this is about hearing from you  
24 tonight.

25 So with that, I'm going to turn it back to Mr.

1           Dong to call our first witness. Mr. Dong?

2           **MR. DONG:** The first witness is Franklin Ward.

3                           [Witness affirmed]

4   THEREUPON came,

5                           **F R A N K L I N   W A R D ,**

6   who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

7           **MR. RICHARDSON:** Please state your name and  
8           address, for the record.

9           **WITNESS:** My name is Franklin Ward. 128  
10          Fenrir Drive, Columbia, South Carolina 29229.

11                   Palmetto Utilities employs eight people, yet  
12          Palmetto Utilities has made approximately \$15  
13          million a year just off the homes, since 2013, a  
14          year. Why do they need a rate increase? Anyone in  
15          this room with this kind of income could figure out  
16          how to pay off a million-dollar debt – million-  
17          dollar debts, without a rate increase.

18                   In my research, Public Service Commission has  
19          never disapproved a 300 percent rate increase which  
20          has been given to Palmetto Utilities over the  
21          years, though it has often changed hands from  
22          private individuals to, currently, to Milliken.  
23          Why does the company change hands so often? County  
24          Administrator Mr. Carpenter is quoted in the  
25          *Chronicle Independent* as saying that these spills

1 by Palmetto Utilities due to power failures are  
2 examples of just an ongoing poor operation and  
3 maintenance which resulted in more than 1.5 million  
4 gallons of wastewater being spilled, and the  
5 question also was asked whether or not that DHEC  
6 was ever – ever fined Palmetto Utilities.

7 It's the current owners of Palmetto Utilities  
8 using the same excuses for rate increases that was  
9 used in 2013. In the last rate increases, did  
10 Palmetto Utilities know of the expenses and  
11 projects that are currently going on, and did the  
12 company, current company, buy a bad investment and  
13 expect the Public Service Commission to bail them  
14 out?

15 The current Palmetto Utilities' stated  
16 information seems to be smoke and mirrors, and is  
17 changing currently, and I think you all have  
18 recently received a stipulation from Palmetto  
19 Utilities that was not in the homeowners' – the  
20 information that was given to people in the local  
21 area. And I was curious whether or not that the  
22 current information that y'all have received has  
23 been verified, that had been given to you by  
24 Milliken.

25 And also, is Milliken using the Public Service



1 Commission as their sole source for reasonable rate  
2 of return, instead of through other means? Did the  
3 Public Service Commission create the current  
4 problem by allowing the annexation of the  
5 Woodlands/Alpine area, whereby Palmetto Utilities  
6 went ahead, spent millions of dollars, and knew  
7 that the Public Service Commission would give them  
8 an irresponsible rate of return?

9 Okay, what effort has Milliken used to obtain  
10 funding for projects besides the Public Service  
11 Commission cookie jar? And, basically, could they  
12 have sold bonds, written off expenditures, obtained  
13 government grants, like Dominion Energy has done?

14 Eighty-five percent of the public does not  
15 make \$108,000 a year, and distrusts government  
16 organizations to do the right thing. If you have  
17 any real sincerity to help the common people of the  
18 State of South Carolina and in the Richland Two,  
19 the Northeast area, you need to deny this rate  
20 increase.

21 Thank you.

22 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Ward. If  
23 you'd just – Mr. Ward, if you'd just remain seated  
24 for one second, and let's see if there are any  
25 questions from the company or ORS or the

Commissioners.

Mr. Hoefer, any questions of this witness from the company?

**MR. HOEFER:** No questions for Mr. Ward, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** ORS, Mr. Nelson?

**MR. NELSON:** No, thank you, sir.

**CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners, any questions for Mr. Ward?

[No response]

I don't see any, Mr. Ward. So, thank you for your testimony and thank you for your participation.

**WITNESS:** Thank you, sir.

[WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

**CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Next witness, Mr. Dong.

**MR. DONG:** Charles Madden.

**MR. MADDEN:** I'm going to defer, currently.

**MR. DONG:** Thank you.

Margaret Houck?

[Witness affirmed]

THEREUPON came,

**M A R G A R E T   H O U C K ,**

who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

**MR. RICHARDSON:** Please state your name and

1 address, for the record.

2 **WITNESS:** My name is Margaret Houck. My  
3 address is 120 Norse Drive, Columbia, South  
4 Carolina 29229.

5 My family moved to this address in 2002. I  
6 believe at that time, the payment that we made  
7 monthly to Palmetto Utilities was \$16.50. In that  
8 house, my husband and I reared three children, now  
9 grown. Our household of five has become a  
10 household of two. Our sewer charge is now twice  
11 what it was when we had our household of five.

12 The proposed rate increase to \$78 a month  
13 represents more than a 300 percent increase over  
14 the \$16.50 we paid in 2002. Our family is  
15 affected. Many other families are affected, as  
16 well. And it will be an increased burden for many.

17 The case for fiscal necessity for this  
18 increase has not been made. I oppose the proposed  
19 rate increase.

20 Furthermore, I would like to state that I  
21 received a letter from Palmetto Utilities dated  
22 October 9th, making a correction of the date that  
23 evidence could be submitted to this Commission. In  
24 that letter, Palmetto Utilities stated that the  
25 Commission hearing would be January 17th. In fact,

1           this hearing is January 9th. No letter of  
2           correction was sent by Palmetto Utilities to the  
3           customers.

4           Thank you.

5           **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Ms. Houck.  
6           Mr. Hoefer.

7           **MR. HOEFER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a  
8           few quick questions.

9                           **CROSS EXAMINATION**

10          **BY MR. HOEFER:**

11          **Q**    Ma'am, could you please spell your last name?

12          **A**    H-o-u-c-k.

13                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Hoefer, do you mind  
14           getting to a microphone, please, sir, or putting on  
15           a Lavalier?

16                   **MR. HOEFER:** [Indicating.] Thank you. I'm  
17           sorry, Mr. Chairman.

18          **BY MR. HOEFER:**

19          **Q**    Thank you for giving me the spelling of your name, Ms.  
20           Houck. Did you receive a Notice of this night hearing?

21          **A**    I received a Notice that evidence – that a letter  
22           stating that evidence had to be presented by October –  
23           some date was incorrect, and that the evidence could be  
24           submitted as late as October 20th. I received that on –  
25           the letter was dated October 9th. It stated in that

1 letter that the hearing would be January 17th.

2 **Q** And do you believe that there is not going to be a  
3 hearing on January 17th?

4 **A** I do not know that. I know that, when I went online,  
5 that the hearing was a scheduled hearing for January  
6 9th.

7 **Q** You went online to the Commission website?

8 **A** Yes.

9 **Q** Okay. Did you receive a separate Notice about this  
10 hearing tonight?

11 **A** No, sir, I did not.

12 **MR. HOEFER:** Okay. Thank you.

13 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Hoefer.  
14 Mr. Nelson, any questions from ORS?

15 **MR. NELSON:** No questions of Ms. Houck. Thank  
16 you.

17 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** One second – one second,  
18 Ms. Houck.

19 **WITNESS:** Yes.

20 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** I think Commissioner  
21 Fleming may have a question of you.

22 Go ahead, Commissioner Fleming.

23 **EXAMINATION**

24 **BY COMMISSIONER FLEMING:**

25 **Q** Nice to have you with us tonight.

1     **A**     Thank you.

2     **Q**     Could you talk a little bit about the service of  
3             Palmetto Utilities for you? Are you pleased with the  
4             service? Have there been problems?

5     **A**     I have to – the reason I’m hesitating, when we first  
6             moved to our house, we had –

7                     **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Ms. Houck, could you pull  
8             that mic just a little closer?

9                     **WITNESS:** [Indicating.] When we first moved to  
10            our house, we had sewage backup and had to have  
11            roots cleared from lines. I’m hesitating because  
12            I’m trying to remember who did that clearing, and I  
13            do believe we employed a plumbing company to come  
14            and to clear out those lines. Other than that,  
15            service has been consistent and it has been  
16            effective.

17   **BY COMMISSIONER FLEMING:**

18   **Q**     So the lines were in your yard?

19   **A**     Correct.

20   **Q**     Okay, so – which is the owner’s responsibility.

21   **A**     Uh-huh.

22   **Q**     And you moved there in 2009, you say?

23   **A**     2002.

24                     **COMMISSIONER FLEMING:** Oh, okay. Thank you.

25                     **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Commissioner

1 Fleming.

2 Commissioners, any other Commissioners have  
3 questions for Ms. Houck?

4 [No response]

5 If not, I've got a few for you, Ms. Houck.

6 **EXAMINATION**

7 **BY CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:**

8 **Q** I just heard Commissioner Fleming – I thought I heard  
9 her correctly that you moved there in 2002; is that  
10 right?

11 **A** Correct.

12 **Q** And I'm not – I don't think I'm familiar with your  
13 address you gave. Tell me about what area this is,  
14 where you reside, where your service area is.

15 **A** It's a neighborhood called The Woodlands.

16 **Q** Okay.

17 **A** It is located off of Sparkleberry Road.

18 **Q** Okay. Okay. Familiar with Sparkleberry. One other  
19 question, if I could. You may have said it, and if you  
20 did I missed it, in your testimony. Who was your  
21 service provider when you moved there in '02?

22 **A** Palmetto –

23 **Q** So it was –

24 **A** – Utilities, Incorporated.

25 **Q** – Palmetto then? It was Palmetto then?

1     **A**     Correct.

2                     **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** All right. That's all I  
3             have.

4                     If no further questions, thank you, Ms. Houck,  
5             for your testimony, and you may step down.

6                     **WITNESS:** Thank you.

7                     [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

8                     **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Dong, next witness.

9                     **MR. DONG:** Sam Smith.

10                    [Witness affirmed]

11     THEREUPON came,

12                             **S A M   S M I T H ,**

13     who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

14                    **MR. RICHARDSON:** Please state your name and  
15             address, for the record.

16                    **WITNESS:** I'm Sam Smith. I live at 201  
17             Windwood Drive, Elgin, SC 29045.

18                    I went to one of the preliminary meetings that  
19             were held, and there was really a good suggestion  
20             made that we take part of the increased money for  
21             the sewage treatment and then turn part of it over  
22             for maintenance of the system. And I'm all for  
23             that, because I think what we've got working right  
24             now works just fine.

25                    The second thing, though, is just there's a –



1 the plan shocked me that they're really going to  
2 build, or want to build, a new sewage treatment  
3 plant along I-26, clean the sewage, dump it in one  
4 of the rivers in Kershaw County. That's the plan.  
5 But the thing that got me is that, at the meeting,  
6 we were – it was told – I was told that this would  
7 be primarily to get new customers. And the  
8 question is why am I being charged to build a new  
9 facility?

10 And that's the best I can say. We're looking  
11 at – I was a math teacher. I true confess. The  
12 percentage increase is proposed to be about 86  
13 percent increase, all of a sudden, for a facility  
14 that I don't need and will not use. It's 86  
15 percent, and in my mind, we should 86 the idea.

16 Thank you.

17 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Smith.

18 Mr. Hoefer, any questions for –

19 **MR. HOEFER:** No questions.

20 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** – this witness?

21 **MR. HOEFER:** No questions for Mr. Smith, Mr.  
22 Chairman.

23 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Okay. Mr. Nelson, Office  
24 of Regulatory Staff?

25 **MR. NELSON:** No questions. Thank you, Mr.

1 Smith.

2 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioners, any  
3 questions for Mr. Smith? Commissioner Howard.

4 EXAMINATION

5 BY COMMISSIONER HOWARD:

6 Q Mr. Smith, you indicated that you are reluctant to pay  
7 for a new, improved sewage treatment plant. Is the  
8 neighborhood you live in pretty well built out, or does  
9 it still have some vacant lots in areas?

10 A First, it's mostly filled. And when I said that I  
11 wasn't sure why they were building a new facility, I  
12 don't know why we would need a new facility to handle my  
13 individual needs and in my neighborhood. That's what I  
14 meant.

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay. Thank you, very  
16 much. Appreciate it. Appreciate you coming, too.

17 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you, Commissioner  
18 Howard.

19 If there are no other further Commissioner  
20 questions for Mr. Smith, Mr. Smith, thank you for  
21 your testimony, and you may step down, sir.

22 WITNESS: Thank you.

23 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

24 MR. DONG: Paul Jolin?

25 [Witness affirmed]

1 THEREUPON came,

2 P A U L J O L I N ,

3 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

4 MR. RICHARDSON: Please state your name and  
5 address, for the record.

6 WITNESS: My name is Paul Jolin. I live at  
7 333 Deer Run Road, in Elgin, 29045.

8 I have a question. Are these rate increases  
9 because of existing maintenance of equipment and  
10 replacement, or are these increases due to future  
11 expansion of new-home and commercial developments?  
12 If it's for future expansion of new developments, I  
13 believe that the developer should pay for the  
14 expenses related to his project from his profits  
15 that would tax the existing systems. Existing  
16 ratepayers I do not believe should have to pay for  
17 the new developments.

18 Thank you, very much.

19 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you for your  
20 testimony, Mr. Jolin.

21 Mr. Hoefer, any questions of this witness?

22 MR. HOEFER: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

23 CROSS EXAMINATION

24 BY MR. HOEFER:

25 Q Mr. Jolin, could you spell your last name for me, sir?

1     **A**     J-o-l-i-n.

2     **Q**     J-o-l-i-n?

3     **A**     Correct.

4     **Q**     And could you tell me the address? 333 –

5     **A**     Deer Run Road.

6     **Q**     Deer Run.

7     **A**     Yeah. It's in Elgin.

8                     **MR. HOEFER:** Thank you, so much.

9                     **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Hoefer.

10                    Mr. Nelson, any questions for this witness?

11                    **MR. NELSON:** No questions. Thank you, Mr.  
12                    Jolin.

13                    **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners, questions  
14                    for Mr. Jolin?

15                             [No response]

16                    I don't see any, Mr. Jolin. But again, I  
17                    would reiterate, any of the questions you might  
18                    have, I certainly would offer after the hearing to  
19                    seek out the Office of Regulatory Staff or maybe  
20                    the company. They could possibly give you some  
21                    answers to your questions. And thank you for your  
22                    testimony.

23                    **WITNESS:** Thank you, very much.

24                    **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Yes, sir.

25                             [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

1 Mr. Dong, next witness.

2 MR. DONG: Teresa Ratliff.

3 [Witness affirmed]

4 THEREUPON came,

5 T E R E S A R A T L I F ,

6 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

7 MR. RICHARDSON: Please state your name and  
8 address, for the record.

9 WITNESS: Teresa Ratliff. 228 North Donar  
10 Drive.

11 And I agree with Mr. Jolin. That was one of  
12 my points, too.

13 My bill – my water bill is \$22 and my Palmetto  
14 Utilities bills is \$36.50. And the rate increase  
15 on the paper said it was going to go up to \$90-  
16 something a month. How can I use more sewage than  
17 I have water that I'm using, accumulating? And we  
18 live in a – you know, our neighborhood is full, and  
19 we have a lot of people on income budgets, and it's  
20 going to put a big hardship to triple our bill.  
21 And I think the rich developers need to pay for  
22 their own equipment. And that's all.

23 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Okay. Ms. Ratliff, if  
24 you'll just hang with us for just a second. Thank  
25 you for your testimony, and let me see if there are

1 any questions for you.

2 Mr. Hoefer.

3 **MR. HOEFER:** No questions of this witness, Mr.  
4 Chairman.

5 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Nelson, any questions  
6 of this witness?

7 **CROSS EXAMINATION**

8 **BY MR. NELSON:**

9 **Q** Ms. Ratliff, I didn't get the street name, again. Is  
10 that North –

11 **A** North Donar. N. D-o-n-a-r.

12 **Q** Thank you, ma'am. What neighborhood are y'all in?

13 **A** I'm part of the – it's right behind that Mexican  
14 restaurant on Sparkleberry. Kind of Woodlands Glen –  
15 no, it's not Woodlands Glen. But it's before you get to  
16 the richer section.

17 **MR. NELSON:** Near Sparkleberry Road? Okay.

18 Thank you, ma'am.

19 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Hold on one second, Ms.  
20 Ratliff.

21 **WITNESS:** Okay.

22 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Let me see if the  
23 Commissioners have any questions. Commissioner  
24 Fleming.

25 <

**EXAMINATION****BY COMMISSIONER FLEMING:**

**Q** Good evening, Ms. Ratliff. Glad to have you here. How long have you lived in the neighborhood?

**A** Since 1989. And we went from \$16.50 and now we're at \$36.50 a month.

**Q** Okay, thank you. And, well, let me ask about your service. Are you pleased with your service?

**A** Always had good service. They've always been good.

**COMMISSIONER FLEMING:** Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Commissioner Fleming.

Commissioner Howard.

**EXAMINATION****BY COMMISSIONER HOWARD:**

**Q** Glad to have you with us. Are you in that section – apparently, there were some clients that paid for their water, and their sewer bill was related to their water. Are you in that group?

**A** No, sir, I don't think.

**Q** You've always paid a flat rate for sewer?

**A** Yes, sir.

**COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Commissioner Howard, for your question.

1 Any other questions of Ms. Ratliff?

2 [No response]

3 If not, Ms. Ratliff, thank you for being here.  
4 Thank you for your testimony. And you may step  
5 down.

6 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

7 **MR. DONG:** Ronnie Justice.

8 [Witness affirmed]

9 THEREUPON came,

10 **R O N N I E J U S T I C E ,**  
11 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

12 **MR. RICHARDSON:** State your name and address,  
13 for the record.

14 **WITNESS:** Ronnie Justice. 801 Cold Branch  
15 Drive, Columbia, South Carolina 29223. That's the  
16 North Springs Subdivision. We moved there in May  
17 of '93.

18 We were on the City of Columbia system, which  
19 our sewage bill was related to how much water we  
20 used, and still is. Palmetto took us over a couple  
21 of years ago. I think they bought us from  
22 Columbia, for reasons they know that I don't. But  
23 I would like to point out that I have my current  
24 bill, and it says we have one consumption unit.  
25 And there's only two of us, and we used one unit of



1 water, and this new increase they put out – in the  
2 letter I got – said they want to charge everybody  
3 the same rate, no matter how much water they used  
4 or sewage they put out, one price fits all. And I  
5 just don't see that. Households of one, widows and  
6 widowers and young people just starting out, don't  
7 use as much water and put out as much sewage as  
8 large families and large households with a lot of  
9 people living together and sharing expenses. So  
10 why should old married couples, like my wife and  
11 myself, and single people, have to pay as much as  
12 large families and these large groups living in a  
13 house, putting out more sewage?

14 So that's my point, that I think we should  
15 stay with the consumption based on how much water  
16 you use, because you can't measure how much water  
17 goes out. There's no meters for that, that I know  
18 of. So that's about it.

19 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Justice.  
20 Let me see if there are any questions for you.

21 Mr. Hoefer, any questions for this witness?

22 **MR. HOEFER:** No questions for Mr. Justice, Mr.  
23 Chairman.

24 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you.

25 Mr. Nelson, any questions from ORS.

1                   **MR. NELSON:** No questions, Mr. Justice.

2                   Appreciate it.

3                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners, any  
4                   questions for Mr. Justice?

5                   [No response]

6                   I have one for you, just quick, to identify  
7                   some things.

8                   **EXAMINATION**

9                   **BY CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:**

10          **Q**     Mr. Justice, you said you've been a resident since 1983?

11          **A**     '93.

12          **Q**     '93.

13          **A**     '93.

14          **Q**     '93, and that's – Cold Branch is in the North Springs –

15          **A**     Subdivision.

16          **Q**     – Subdivision? And your provider, when you first came  
17                  in there?

18          **A**     City of Columbia.

19                  **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** City of Columbia. Okay.

20                  That's all I have.

21                  Any other questions for Mr. Justice?

22                  [No response]

23                  If not, thank you for your testimony, and you  
24                  may step down?

25                  [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

1                   **MR. DONG:** Ronda Reynolds.

2                               [Witness affirmed]

3 THEREUPON came,

4                               **R O N D A   R E Y N O L D S ,**

5 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

6                   **MR. RICHARDSON:** State your name and address,  
7 for the record.

8                   **WITNESS:** Good evening. My name is Ronda  
9 Reynolds. I live at 603 Summit Square, Columbia,  
10 29229; that's in the Summit Subdivision.

11 I just recently moved here. I moved here in  
12 August. I'm a widow of a 22-year-old – 22-year  
13 Navy veteran, living on a fixed income. Part of  
14 the reason I chose this townhouse at Summit Square  
15 was because of the affordability.

16 This price is going to more than double. I  
17 have used \$11 worth of water each and every month  
18 since I've moved in, excluding the very first month  
19 where I was cleaning and doing a lot of laundry and  
20 all the bathrooms and all the things that needs to  
21 be done. But since then, \$11 worth of water. And  
22 you're going to charge me \$65 – or \$62.50 – to  
23 dispose of \$11 worth of water? It doesn't seem to  
24 make sense to me. It doesn't seem to make any  
25 fiscal sense to me. I'm being penalized to

1           conserve. In a world where we need to conserve our  
2           natural resources, it seems to me that we are being  
3           penalized for that very conserving. My usage is  
4           not what a big family will be. My usage will never  
5           be what a big family would be.

6           My other point would be, most households, if  
7           you have a budget where you need to do changes in  
8           that household, you budget that. You figure out  
9           how to make those ends meet, just like I do every  
10          month. It seems to me that Palmetto Utilities have  
11          yet to give me a good reason why I should pay this  
12          big increase. If they need to change things, then  
13          you budget it, and you make adjustments, whether it  
14          be in bonuses, whether it be – whatever the case  
15          might be. They need to figure out how to make it  
16          without putting the burden on the very people that  
17          they are serving, by raising our rates two and  
18          three and four times.

19          I happen to be one of the ones that are paying  
20          the \$36.50. I understand there are other people  
21          here paying much less than that. And that's fine.  
22          I knew what I was paying when I signed on the  
23          dotted line on July 14th, when I closed on my  
24          house. I had a paper and pencil, and I figured  
25          out, down to the bottom dollar, what I was going to

1 pay every month, to make sure I could afford it.  
2 And I can. But this is going to put a hardship on  
3 me. This is going to make a difference. And  
4 that's why I chose to speak tonight. That's why I  
5 thank you for allowing me to speak tonight, for the  
6 many of us that are on fixed incomes, the many of  
7 us that are on budgets, and the many of us that are  
8 just single people trying to make it the best we  
9 can.

10 Thank you.

11 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Ms. Reynolds.

12 Mr. Hoefer, any questions for Ms. Reynolds?

13 **MR. HOEFER:** No questions, Mr. Chairman, but I  
14 would like to thank Ms. Reynolds for her husband's  
15 service to our country.

16 **WITNESS:** Thank you.

17 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Nelson, any  
18 questions?

19 **MR. NELSON:** Thank you, very much, Ms.  
20 Reynolds. Appreciate it.

21 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners, any  
22 questions of Ms. Reynolds?

23 [No response]

24 Well, Ms. Reynolds, I'd like to ask you one.

25 <

**EXAMINATION****BY CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:****Q** You moved here in August?**A** Yes, sir.**Q** What were you – if I might ask, what were you paying – where did you move from and, if you wouldn't mind sharing what your bills were there?**A** It's somewhat of a loaded question. I was actually living with my son. After my husband passed away, my son actually went through a divorce simultaneously. He attained custody of his children and he asked me to come and help. So I was living with him, in Maine, and so I really didn't have those bills.

The reason I chose to live here was some years ago my husband actually worked for Savannah River Site and we lived in Augusta, Georgia. Those of you that have been around for a while, you might remember Service Merchandise, and I was a store manager for Service Merchandise, at one point. I had friends in this area, I came to visit friends. We got a wild hair and went looking, and I found this townhouse, and it was something that I could afford.

**Q** And you don't happen to know what your bills were where you were in Maine, I guess?**A** It was septic and a private well.

1                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** I understand. All right.  
2                   Well, thank you for that.

3                   And if no other Commissioners have questions  
4                   of Ms. Reynolds, then, Ms. Reynolds, thank you for  
5                   your testimony and thank you for being here  
6                   tonight.

7                   **WITNESS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8                   [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

9                   **MR. DONG:** Joel Barnes.

10                  [Witness affirmed]

11                  THEREUPON came,

12                               **J O E L   B A R N E S ,**

13                  who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

14                   **MR. RICHARDSON:** Please state your name and  
15                   address, for the record.

16                   **WITNESS:** Well, first of all, thank you very  
17                   much for letting me speak. My name is Joel Barnes.  
18                   I live at 113 Valkyrie Boulevard, which is in The  
19                   Woodlands. I've lived there since May 1989.

20                   I want to try to reaffirm a little bit what I  
21                   say, with a different light on what others have  
22                   said. I think when we went to the meeting that was  
23                   held, a public meeting, we were advised of two  
24                   things that were rather shocking. One was that the  
25                   utility people had spent some \$80 million on their

1 own. This is to build a new plant, and they want  
2 to be paid for it. Number two, that we were going  
3 to – or they were going to incorporate people that  
4 lived in the city into the system, and that was  
5 going to cost more money.

6 You know, the thing that really gets me is  
7 that we just went through this SCANA business, and  
8 I don't understand how an entity is able to spend  
9 that much money without being first published in  
10 the newspapers as to what was going on. Maybe that  
11 question can be answered later.

12 What I wanted to say, though, is that in the  
13 process of the discussions that we had, it was  
14 mentioned that the new tap-on fees for new homes  
15 would be about \$1000. Now, I have lived in  
16 different cities, and in 1972 I paid \$2000 just to  
17 tap on. I was in Pennsylvania. I think that that  
18 number should be closer to \$4000 or \$5000 on a  
19 \$200,000 home. I think it's only right. It's only  
20 like 2 percent of an increase.

21 The other thing that I wanted to talk about  
22 was these – quote, unquote – “customers” that would  
23 be added from the city, why is that increasing our  
24 cost? They're already paying that. Why can't they  
25 pay the same?



1           The other thing I'd like to talk about is that  
2           – the business of the low-income people. I feel as  
3           though that the low-income people should be given  
4           some type of – oh, I can't think of the name right  
5           now. If you'll – [indicating]. I can't think of  
6           the words that I wrote down here. We have an  
7           exemption – a homestead exemption. Why can't these  
8           people take their water bills and go to the utility  
9           and say, "This is what I'm paying. Why should I  
10          have to pay that much," and have different rates  
11          for different people?

12          The other thing is, the cost increases for  
13          this \$80 million plant – and I got a copy of a  
14          stipulation. I guess we're not going to talk about  
15          the plant in this meeting? We're going to talk  
16          about it at some other date? I'd like to know what  
17          that is, because I feel that the new people hooking  
18          onto that are the ones that need to pay.

19          Thank you, very much.

20          **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Barnes.

21          Mr. Hoefer, any questions of this witness?

22          **MR. HOEFER:** No questions for Mr. Barnes, Mr.  
23          Chairman.

24          **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Nelson, questions for  
25          Mr. Barnes?

1                   **MR. NELSON:** No questions for Mr. Barnes. I  
2 would like to tell if you, if you want to talk to  
3 us afterwards, we may be able to answer some of  
4 those questions for you.

5                   **WITNESS:** Thank you.

6                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners, any  
7 Commissioner questions for Mr. Barnes?

8                   [No response]

9                   Mr. Barnes, it doesn't look like we have any  
10 Commissioner questions, but I would like to – at  
11 the same time I thank you for your testimony and  
12 your participation, I would – I can't help but  
13 notice that, as Mr. Nelson said, you had a lot of  
14 questions in your testimony. And, again, I would  
15 refer you to Mr. Nelson after the meeting, and  
16 maybe you can get some of your questions answered.  
17 I can answer one of them for you right now that's  
18 procedural in nature, and that's the merits hearing  
19 on this case is next week, next Wednesday, the  
20 17th. So there will be a full-blown case on this  
21 next week, so the public – anybody in the public  
22 can sit here and watch it, if you would like. So  
23 beyond that, I would thank you for your testimony,  
24 and you may step down.

25                   **WITNESS:** Thank you.

1 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

2 MR. DONG: Thomas Jackson<sub>[sic]</sub>.

3 [Witness affirmed]

4 THEREUPON came,

5 T H O M A S J U C H U M ,

6 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

7 MR. RICHARDSON: State your name and address,  
8 for the record.

9 WITNESS: My name is Tom Juchum. I live at  
10 612 Wotan Road, Columbia, South Carolina 29229, in  
11 The Woodlands. I've lived there since 2003.

12 Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the  
13 proposed rate increase, as proposed by Palmetto  
14 Utilities. I will, for brevity's sake, use this  
15 time to focus solely on one argument against the  
16 suggested increase.

17 We, as consumers and ratepayers, are faced  
18 daily with shopping for the best goods and services  
19 at the best price. In a competitive environment,  
20 we can opt for the best choice among many. In a  
21 monopolistic world, we ratepayers find ourselves  
22 with limited opportunities to reduce costs, but  
23 there are, usually, some, except in the case of  
24 Palmetto Utilities. Let me explain. We are all  
25 dependent on water, electricity, and other staples

1 of life. With our water company being a monopoly,  
2 we do have the option to reduce costs by installing  
3 water reducers in our faucets, taking shorter  
4 showers, and even – if we can afford it –  
5 installing a well for irrigation. In the case of  
6 our current electric service company, we can opt to  
7 turn up our thermostat in the summer, or down in  
8 the winter, we can even purchase LED lights,  
9 drilling our children to turn off their appliances  
10 and electronics, and we can even go with solar  
11 panels.

12 In each of these cases, the ratepayers have  
13 some sort of control, limited as it is, to affect  
14 the costs associated with these utilities.

15 Palmetto Utilities is requesting almost a doubling  
16 of their rate without offering the ratepayers any  
17 way of reducing their costs through a reduction of  
18 usage or greater efficiencies. Indeed, they are  
19 almost encouraging the customers to use their  
20 system to a greater degree of waste – no pun  
21 intended. There's no incentive for anyone to use  
22 their system with care or respect; no matter how  
23 they treat your system, the cost is the same.

24 Additionally, they're proposing to charge  
25 everyone the same for little usage or excessive.

1           The widow of 82 will pay as much as a family of  
2           four, five, or six. The retired couple who migrate  
3           south for the winter will pay the same as those who  
4           use their resources every day. It's a one-size-  
5           fits-all, inequitable, unreasonable, and truly  
6           unfair situation.

7           Palmetto Utilities needs to rethink their  
8           mechanism for charging their customers. Their  
9           proposed solution of a flat rate for everyone, with  
10          no basis on consumption and usage, is contrary to  
11          the principle of conservation and equity. Every  
12          metric in society is based on proportion. How much  
13          we use, how much we make, how much we spend, and  
14          how much we save. While there are other serious  
15          issues with the scope and size of this rate  
16          increase, I find a fixed rate of this increase  
17          without being based on usage most troubling and I  
18          ask the PSC to reflect on this element as they  
19          consider Palmetto Utilities' requested rate  
20          increase.

21                Thank you.

22                **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Could you spell your last  
23                name, again? Mr. Dong and I didn't get that. Or  
24                say your name again?

25                **WITNESS:** The J is silent. It's Juchum. J-u-

1 c-h-u-m.

2 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: J-u-c-h- —

3 WITNESS: -u-m.

4 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: First name Tom, right?

5 WITNESS: Yes, sir.

6 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: All right, Mr. Juchum.

7 Thank you for your testimony.

8 Mr. Hoefer?

9 EXAMINATION

10 BY MR. HOEFER:

11 Q Mr. Juchum, could you tell me what your address is? I  
12 think it's 612, but I didn't catch the last part.

13 A 612 Wotan Road.

14 Q Could you spell "Wotan"?

15 A W-o-t-a-n.

16 Q Okay. Are you — do you pay, currently, pay a \$36.50  
17 monthly flat rate?

18 A Yes, sir.

19 MR. HOEFER: Thank you, very much.

20 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Thank you, Mr. Hoefer.

21 Mr. Nelson.

22 EXAMINATION

23 BY MR. NELSON:

24 Q Just curiosity, sir. Who is your water provider out  
25 there?

1     **A**     City of Columbia.

2                     **MR. NELSON:** Thank you.

3                     **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners, questions  
4                     of Mr. Juchum?

5                     [No response]

6                     Hearing none, thank you for your testimony,  
7                     Mr. Juchum, and you may step down.

8                     [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

9                     **MR. DONG:** Gary Wilhelm?

10                    [Witness affirmed]

11     THEREUPON came,

12                    **G A R Y   W I L H E L M ,**

13     who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

14                    **MR. RICHARDSON:** Please state your name and  
15                    address, for the record.

16                    **WITNESS:** my name is Gary Wilhelm, W-i-l-h-e-  
17                    l-m. I live at 111 Siegfried Lane, and that is The  
18                    Woodlands Subdivision in Northeast Columbia. I'm  
19                    also the president of the homeowners' association.  
20                    And, as you can see, there's been many people here  
21                    tonight from the Woodlands Association, so we are  
22                    firmly against the rate increase.

23                    Some of the numbers I'm going to give tonight,  
24                    these numbers are just estimates. I hope they're  
25                    not – I don't think they increase very much, but my

1 current water bill is with the City of Columbia and  
2 I spend \$22 a month, and the proposed increase for  
3 sewer would be \$68 a month, which is going to be  
4 close to \$750 a year over the \$264 a year I pay for  
5 water. That seems to be a pretty big increase just  
6 to get water back down the pipe.

7 Over a three-year period, with the 33,000  
8 people who are now on Palmetto Utilities, that'll  
9 be approximately \$30 million a year, and over a  
10 three-year period you're looking at \$90 million  
11 that would pay for the \$80 million plant. At the  
12 current rate of \$36.50, that's approximately \$14  
13 million – \$14½ million a year, and that would be a  
14 six-year period of \$88 million, which would still  
15 pay for the plant or, you know, the plant that's  
16 already been built, and with no increase at all.

17 So we just – we tried to figure out why, you  
18 know. We try to conserve, we try to recycle, we  
19 try to do everything it is to keep our city,  
20 country, world clean for our future children. So,  
21 therefore, I'm just thinking that someone has gone  
22 above and beyond, wanting more money than what is  
23 needed.

24 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Wilhelm,  
25 for your testimony.



1 Mr. Hoefer?

2 MR. HOEFER: No questions for Mr. Wilhelm, Mr.  
3 Chairman.

4 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Mr. Nelson?

5 MR. NELSON: No questions. Thank you, sir.

6 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioners, any  
7 questions for Mr. Wilhelm?

8 [No response]

9 If not, Mr. Wilhelm, thank you for your  
10 testimony and thank you for your participation, and  
11 thank you, sir, and you may step down.

12 WITNESS: Thank you.

13 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

14 MR. DONG: Harry Miley?

15 [Witness affirmed]

16 THEREUPON came,

17 H A R R Y M I L E Y ,  
18 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

19 MR. RICHARDSON: State your name and address,  
20 for the record.

21 WITNESS: Hello. My name is Harry Miley. My  
22 address is 3849 Edinburgh Road, in Forest Acres.  
23 However, I'm here because I'm the chief financial  
24 officer of Richland School District Two.

25 A little bit about Richland School District

1 Two: It's the largest district in the Midlands. We  
2 have about 4000 employees. We have over 40 sites.  
3 We have about 28,000 students.

4 We're probably not the biggest customer of  
5 Palmetto, but we're a pretty good customer. We  
6 have about 30 sites serviced by them and our bill  
7 is about \$300,000 a year.

8 I'm not qualified to opine about whether the  
9 rate is deserved – that rate increase is deserved,  
10 or not. That's your job. I understand that.

11 We're satisfied with their service. We're  
12 satisfied with their service, and we understand  
13 cost increases. We're a school district; our  
14 budget – we face realities every year, so we  
15 understand that.

16 What we would like to do is, we have been told  
17 that there may be a rate increase phased in. We  
18 understand that, and we have done that several  
19 times in our budget cycles. When we didn't have  
20 enough resources to implement a full program, we  
21 implemented over several years. That helps us  
22 budgetwise and we certainly encourage you, when you  
23 are reviewing this, if that is contemplated, we  
24 would endorse a phase-in of any rate increase.

25 Thank you for having me this evening. I

1 appreciate the opportunity.

2 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Miley.

3 Mr. Hoefer, questions for Mr. Miley?

4 **MR. HOEFER:** No questions for Mr. Miley, Mr.  
5 Chairman.

6 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Nelson.

7 **MR. NELSON:** No questions. Thank you, sir.

8 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners, any  
9 questions for Mr. Miley? Commissioner Howard.

10 **EXAMINATION**

11 **BY COMMISSIONER HOWARD:**

12 **Q** Mr. Miley, how is your sewer bill – how do you get your  
13 sewer bill? Do you have single-family equivalents?

14 **A** Yes.

15 **Q** If so, how many single-family equivalents does your  
16 school district have? And a rough guess is fine. I  
17 mean, I don't need to know exactly.

18 **A** I can't tell you. I don't know. I'm here to – I used  
19 to be just over Finance and on January 1, I inherited –  
20 the entire operational division now reports to me, so  
21 I've been over Operations for about eight days. So I'm  
22 not sure what it is. I do know that our bill is roughly  
23 about \$290,000, last fiscal year. So I don't know what  
24 that equates to in the household units.

25 **Q** That's good.

1     **A**     The proposed increase would be about a \$300,000 increase  
2             to us, once fully implemented on an annual basis.

3             That's a pretty big chunk, but we certainly understand  
4             that, and that's why we were suggesting, if the phase-in  
5             was adopted – nobody likes price increases, but we can  
6             deal with something when it's phased in better than we  
7             can when it's all at one time.

8     **Q**     Thank you, very much.

9     **A**     Thank you.

10                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Commissioner  
11                   Howard.

12                   Commissioner Fleming.

13                   **COMMISSIONER FLEMING:** Yes.

14                   **EXAMINATION**

15     **BY COMMISSIONER FLEMING:**

16     **Q**     Are you – maybe you're not aware of this except on a  
17             personal basis, but have you been pleased with the  
18             service at the school district?

19     **A**     We are – I've not heard any complaints in the last eight  
20             days about the operations and service that we've  
21             received, but I don't believe that's an issue in our  
22             district. I don't believe so.

23     **Q**     Okay. Thank you.

24     **A**     We have issues every day, with 40 sites, and plumbing  
25             and everything, so – but we don't have any problem with

1           that.

2                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** If there are no other  
3           Commissioner questions, Mr. Miley, I've got a  
4           couple for you.

5                   **EXAMINATION**

6 **BY CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:**

7 **Q** I know you've only been in this job, as you've said,  
8           about eight days. Do you have any knowledge of the  
9           history of your aggregate bill, going back some years?

10 **A** No, I don't. I could certainly provide that, if needed.

11 **Q** Also, you described, of course, how big Richland School  
12           District Two is. How many of those sites that you just  
13           mentioned are served by Palmetto Utilities?

14 **A** It's about 30.

15 **Q** Thirty of the forty?

16 **A** Thirty of the forty.

17 **Q** So roughly 75 percent of your sites.

18 **A** Yes, sir. We have 20 elementary schools, seven middle  
19           schools, five high schools, and three or four other  
20           sites.

21                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thirty sites. I believe  
22           that's all I have, and I don't see any other  
23           questions, so thank you for being here and  
24           participating, and thank you for your testimony,  
25           Mr. Miley.

1                   **WITNESS:** Thank you.

2                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, sir. You may  
3                   step down.

4                               [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

5                   Mr. Dong.

6                   **MR. DONG:** James Abraham.

7                               [Witness affirmed]

8                   THEREUPON came,

9                               **J A M E S   A B R A H A M ,**

10                   who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

11                               **MR. RICHARDSON:** State your name and address,  
12                   for the record.

13                               **WITNESS:** Let me turn sideways [indicating].

14                               **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** I feel safe now.

15                               [Laughter]

16                               **WITNESS:** My name is James Abraham. I live in  
17                   the Woodlake Subdivision. I've been living in that  
18                   subdivision for about four years now.

19                               Since moving in that subdivision, we have  
20                   incurred an increase. We were on City of Columbia  
21                   water, and like prior testimony, I just think that  
22                   it's more so that it be on an individual basis  
23                   instead of a flat rate, because the majority of  
24                   individuals aren't making \$100,000 a year, and  
25                   they're not going to be able to, I guess, afford

1           some of the rates that are being pushed forward  
2           with the lack of sewer that they're going to use,  
3           or they use. A single family is not going to use  
4           as much as a family of three or four. So I think  
5           it should be on an individual basis.

6           I have nothing further.

7           **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Okay, Mr. Abraham.

8           Mr. Hoefer, any questions of this witness?

9           **MR. HOEFER:** No, Mr. Chairman.

10          **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Nelson, any questions  
11          of Mr. Abraham?

12                                   **EXAMINATION**

13   **BY MR. NELSON:**

14   **Q**   Mr. Abraham, could you tell me – I didn't get your  
15          street address.

16   **A**   It's 9 Pepperwood Court, Columbia, 29229.

17          **MR. NELSON:** Thank you, sir. Appreciate it.

18          **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners, any  
19          questions of Mr. Abraham?

20                               [No response]

21                                   **EXAMINATION**

22   **BY CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:**

23   **Q**   Well, Mr. Nelson just clarified your address. If you  
24          could give me an idea of where – what area that is,  
25          Pepperwood Court?

1     **A**     It's in the Northlake – Northeast, in Woodlake  
2             Subdivision.

3     **Q**     Woodlake.

4     **A**     Yes, sir.

5                     **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Okay, sir. I don't see  
6             any other questions, but we certainly appreciate  
7             you being here and appreciate your testimony, Mr.  
8             Abraham. And with that, you may step down.

9                     **WITNESS:** Thank you, sir.

10                    [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

11                    **MR. DONG:** Sara Baskins.

12                    [Witness affirmed]

13     THEREUPON came,

14                    **S A R A   B A S K I N S ,**

15     who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

16                    **MR. RICHARDSON:** Please state your name and  
17             address, for the record.

18                    **WITNESS:** My name is Sara Baskins.   8  
19             Wheatstone, in the Summit.

20                    I wanted to say that it's an 86 percent  
21             increase, and we understand that things have to go  
22             up as everything goes up with inflation, the  
23             charges, but no one's getting a pay increase of 86  
24             percent. And while I certainly understand why you  
25             need to charge more, that is a huge burden on



1 families, especially folks that have fixed incomes  
2 and pay a lot of medical bills and a lot of  
3 medication. We pay about \$200-\$250 a month in  
4 medication. And having my bill go up from \$35 to  
5 the — I'm sorry, I'm nervous — go up to almost \$90,  
6 or, excuse me, almost \$70, that is just an extreme  
7 hardship that we're definitely going to feel. And  
8 I've lived up and down the East Coast.

9 We've lived here since — in this subdivision  
10 since 2013. Before that, I lived in Chapin. And  
11 I've never paid this much in sewer before, at the  
12 \$35, so I thought that was a lot, and then hear  
13 that they're going to take it all the way up to  
14 almost \$70. That seemed like an awful lot.

15 If we could have an increase that's less, or —  
16 significantly less, or based off of what your usage  
17 is, because we're a two-person household and we're  
18 not using — we're not using — not much. Probably  
19 not using \$35. So that's what I wanted to say.

20 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Ms. Baskins.  
21 Let me see if there are a few questions.

22 Mr. Hoefer.

23 **MR. HOEFER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 <

25 <

**CROSS EXAMINATION****BY MR. HOEFER:**

**Q** Ms. Baskins, do you have your water service with the City of Columbia?

**A** Yes, sir.

**Q** What is your monthly water bill, generally?

**A** Twenty-three dollars.

**Q** Is it always \$23?

**A** Twenty-three to twenty-five [\$23-\$25].

**Q** Okay.

**A** It's not a lot.

**Q** Thank you, ma'am.

**A** [Nodding head.]

**CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Hoefer.  
Mr. Nelson, questions for Ms. Baskins?

**MR. NELSON:** No questions. Thank you, Ms.  
Baskins.

**CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Hang on one second, Ms.  
Baskins. Let me see if Commissioners – any  
Commissioner questions for Ms. Baskins?

[No response]

I think you're free to go. Thank you, Ms.  
Baskins, for your testimony.

[WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

**MR. DONG:** Gloria King?

[Witness affirmed]

THEREUPON came,

**G L O R I A   K I N G ,**

who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

**MR. RICHARDSON:** State your name and address,  
for the record.

**WITNESS:** Hello. My name is a Gloria King. I  
live at 104 Thornfield Road, Columbia, South  
Carolina 29229.

I think that an increase of 86 percent is  
aggressive and also unrealistic. South Carolina  
seems to be the golden goose of misleading and  
failed projects. If the regulators don't regulate,  
the customers are sheep waiting to be eaten by the  
wolves. When these projects fail, the customer or  
the consumer is to pay.

Palmetto Utilities lowballed to get the deal  
to serve South Carolina customers. Now that their  
foot is in the door, the cost continues to  
increase. My sewer bill is now over \$300 due to,  
what they say, a \$25 certified fee for mailing a  
letter from the post office. If SCE&G was allowed  
to charge \$25 to mail a certified letter to say  
your bill is late, where would we be? Twenty-five  
dollars is unheard of. It's not like, as a

1 customer, I have the option to pick and choose the  
2 sewer company.

3 I was also a City of Columbia customer, water  
4 customer as well as sewer. That worked out fine.  
5 I am now a customer of Palmetto Utilities, and I do  
6 not wish to continue to be a customer of theirs.  
7 However, because I don't have a choice, or the  
8 choice has been made, I have to continue my  
9 services. It is against my will to continue with  
10 Palmetto Citizen – for Palmetto Utilities.

11 I had a water leak and I went to customer  
12 service to discuss the water leak with the customer  
13 service. They were unwilling to adjust the bill  
14 and continued to charge me late fees.

15 I protest against any price increase for  
16 Palmetto Utilities' customers. My total water  
17 usage and sewer with the City of Columbia was  
18 approximately \$30-\$35 a month. I am now paying  
19 approximately \$100 a month for both bills.  
20 Palmetto Utilities say that they do not go out to  
21 the residence to read the meters, that they are  
22 forwarded the information from the City of  
23 Columbia. So with an 86 percent increase, does  
24 that also mean the City of Columbia is going to  
25 increase, or are they really getting the charges

1 from the City of Columbia?

2 I am a dissatisfied customer of Palmetto  
3 Utilities. And, again, I do not support an  
4 increase.

5 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Ms. King, for  
6 you testimony. If you'll bear with us just a  
7 moment and let's see if there are any questions.

8 Mr. Hoefer, questions of this witness?

9 **MR. HOEFER:** No questions of Ms. King, Mr.  
10 Chairman.

11 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Nelson, questions of  
12 Ms. King?

13 **MR. NELSON:** I don't have any questions, but,  
14 if you want to, we'd love to talk to you after the  
15 hearing, if you have an opportunity.

16 **WITNESS:** Yes, sure.

17 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners, questions  
18 of Ms. King? Commissioner Fleming.

19 **EXAMINATION**

20 **BY COMMISSIONER FLEMING:**

21 **Q** Good evening. Just if you could help me to understand a  
22 little better. You said you were charged \$25 for a  
23 certified letter?

24 **A** Not just once. Several times. I had a water leak. I  
25 was unaware of the leak. My bill got over my budget.

1 So they send – well, first of all, to send a certified  
2 letter, that's free. I don't know how they can legally  
3 get away with charging a \$25 fee for a certified letter  
4 that is normally free to mail from the post office. So  
5 I've gotten a total of probably 10 charges of \$25 each  
6 time. They are unwilling to accommodate or work with,  
7 and I still get late charges. And in – I just worked  
8 with City of Columbia in adjusting my bill because of  
9 the water leak that I had, and which it's fixed now, and  
10 they were more than willing to help me out and adjust  
11 the charges. I have not received the same common  
12 courtesy from Palmetto Utilities.

13 **Q** Have you talked with ORS? The Office of Regulatory  
14 Staff? Have you called to discuss this issue with them?

15 **A** I have not, because I did not know where to turn. I  
16 just feel very stuck in a relationship that is unwanted.

17 **Q** Because they have a – the number they gave out earlier,  
18 if you have issues, sometimes they work with the  
19 customers.

20 **A** Well, I certainly hope so, but my experience since I've  
21 not been a customer of the City of Columbia water and  
22 sewer, has just been a bad experience.

23 **Q** So you have not – you haven't caught up on your bill –

24 **A** No.

25 **Q** – yet? So you're –

1     **A**     I'm still not –

2     **Q**     – still getting –

3     **A**     – and they are still not –

4     **Q**     – the late charges?

5     **A**     Right. They just keep saying, "Well, you know, we need  
6           to get a letter from City of Columbia first," and then  
7           I've taken them the letter. And then they say, "Well,  
8           we'll look at it and see." And, you know, it's just  
9           kind of going around in circles, but no solution.

10    **Q**     And who have you been contacting?

11    **A**     I went to the office.

12    **Q**     Of Palmetto Utilities?

13    **A**     Yes, ma'am.

14    **Q**     Thank you.

15    **A**     Thank you.

16                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Commissioner  
17                   Fleming.

18                   Wait one second, Ms. King. I think we've got  
19                   one more question –

20                   **WITNESS:** Sure.

21                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** – from Commissioner  
22                   Howard, down here on the end.

23                                   **EXAMINATION**

24    **BY COMMISSIONER HOWARD:**

25    **Q**     Yes, ma'am, thank you for coming. Where was your leak?

1 When you found that, finally, where was it?

2 A It was an outside leak, coming from the water hose  
3 connector. And it was on the back of the house, so I  
4 didn't realize that it was leaking for a while.

5 Q Okay, thank you.

6 A You're welcome.

7 **EXAMINATION**

8 **BY CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:**

9 Q Ms. King, I have a question or two for you, myself,  
10 before you go. You said you were a former customer of  
11 City of Columbia. You're still on their water; is that  
12 correct?

13 A Yes, I am still –

14 Q So you're a former sewer customer, too? Is that what  
15 you were saying?

16 A Former sewer customer, yes, because, of course, City of  
17 Columbia, they did, you know, everything. And I really  
18 enjoyed being a customer of City of Columbia. I'm not  
19 sure if that could possibly happen, but, you know, I  
20 guess the decision was made to service out to Palmetto  
21 Utilities.

22 Q But you're still on City of Columbia water now.

23 A Yes, I'm still on their water. Yes, sir.

24 Q I would, again, repeat kind of what Commissioner Fleming  
25 said and Mr. Nelson has offered. South Carolina Office



1 of Regulatory Staff, they have a consumer complaints  
2 division, and he – you've got the right folks here  
3 tonight that can maybe give you some answers and help  
4 you with some of your problems, and maybe find a  
5 solution. So I would certainly suggest after the  
6 meeting to please see them.

7 **A** Yes, sir.

8 **Q** The folks that we identified earlier.

9 **A** Yes, sir.

10 **Q** And maybe they can help you. And thank you for your  
11 testimony.

12 **A** Thank you. Appreciate it.

13 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

14 **MR. DONG:** Previously, I had called Charles  
15 Madden, and he asked to defer. Does Mr. Madden  
16 want to testify now, or does he intend to testify  
17 tonight?

18 **MR. MADDEN:** I'll testify at another meeting.

19 **MR. DONG:** Okay. Thank you.

20 The next name is Phillip Martin.

21 [Witness affirmed]

22 THEREUPON came,

23 **P H I L L I P M A R T I N ,**

24 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

25 **MR. RICHARDSON:** All right. Please state your

1 name and address, for the record.

2 **WITNESS:** I am Phillip Martin. I live at  
3 15 Varsity Lane, Blythewood, South Carolina. And  
4 that is – I live in the Cobblestone neighborhood.

5 We get our water from the Town of Winnsboro,  
6 and so we don't have any problem with water.

7 I moved to Blythewood in 2012. At that time,  
8 my Palmetto Utilities bill was \$33 a month. Now,  
9 without going through each increase between 2012  
10 and December of 2017, my bill has increased seven  
11 times, and the bill is now \$38.33. That's a 16  
12 percent increase over those years.

13 Now Palmetto Utilities wishes to merge with  
14 Palmetto of Richland and increase the monthly fee,  
15 according to the paper that I have in my folder, to  
16 \$68.50 per month. That will be a 77.5 percent  
17 increase over what I am paying now.

18 I am totally opposed to the merger and the  
19 increase in fees. I rather feel that the increase  
20 in fees is because of the merger, and because of  
21 that merger they needed to build the sewer plant.  
22 If the merger doesn't take place, perhaps they  
23 don't need to build a sewer plant. Now they might  
24 need to build it, but I don't have to pay for it.  
25 As I see it, I'm having to pay for a sewer plant

1 for some other neighborhoods, and I'm totally  
2 opposed to the merger and I'm opposed to the  
3 increase in prices.

4 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Martin.  
5 Mr. Hoefer.

6 **MR. HOEFER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 **CROSS EXAMINATION**

8 **BY MR. HOEFER:**

9 **Q** Mr. Martin, do you live in the Town of Blythewood, in  
10 the city limits?

11 **A** Yes, I do.

12 **Q** Does your bill include a franchise fee that's collected  
13 by the Town of Blythewood?

14 **A** Not that I know of.

15 **Q** Do you have a copy of your bill with you?

16 **A** No, I do not.

17 **MR. HOEFER:** Thank you, Mr. Martin.

18 No more questions, Mr. Chairman.

19 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Nelson.

20 **MR. NELSON:** No questions. Thank you, Mr.  
21 Martin.

22 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners?

23 Hang on, Mr. Martin, one second.

24 Commissioners?

25 [No response]

**EXAMINATION****BY CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:**

**Q** I have one for you, Mr. Martin. Didn't you say, Mr. Martin, didn't you say you were served by the Town of Winnsboro water? Correct?

**A** That is correct.

**CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Okay. With that, if there are no further Commissioner questions, thank you for your testimony, and you may step down.

[WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

**MR. DONG:** Patrick O'Brien.

[Witness affirmed]

THEREUPON came,

**P A T R I C K O ' B R I E N ,**

who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

**MR. RICHARDSON:** State your name and address, for the record.

**WITNESS:** I'm Patrick O'Brien. My address is 556 Cordgrass Road, Elgin, South Carolina.

**CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Go ahead, Mr. O'Brien.

**WITNESS:** I'm a single-income home. You know, I recently got out of the military. There's no possible way that me and my family can, you know, do everything that we need to do to support our son and everything else that we have to do, with this

1           increase. We're barely getting by, as it is. And  
2           there's no possible way we can afford a \$40  
3           increase a month, just to get rid of water. Our  
4           water bill has never been higher than \$11, and  
5           normally \$8.50 or \$9 a month. Our electric and gas  
6           bill, less than \$100 a month. We don't use that  
7           much stuff, so there's no reason that our sewage  
8           should be more, or almost as much as our electric  
9           and gas.

10           **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Are you done, Mr.  
11           O'Brien?

12           **WITNESS:** Yes, sir.

13           **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Okay. Thank you for your  
14           testimony. Let me see if there are any questions.  
15           Mr. Hoefer?

16           **MR. HOEFER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17           **CROSS EXAMINATION**

18           **BY MR. HOEFER:**

19           **Q**    Mr. O'Brien, I didn't get the address. 556, did you  
20           say, Cordgrass?

21           **A**    Yes, sir.

22           **Q**    And what subdivision is that in, sir?

23           **A**    It's in The Park.

24           **Q**    The Park?

25           **A**    Yeah. The Park, in Elgin. 82 Churchill.

1                   **MR. HOEFER:** Thank you, so much. I appreciate  
2                   it.

3                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Hoefer.  
4                   Mr. Nelson.

5                   **MR. NELSON:** I don't have any questions.  
6                   Thank you, Mr. O'Brien. Appreciate it.

7                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners, questions  
8                   for Mr. O'Brien?

9                               [No response]

10                   Well, hearing none, Mr. O'Brien, thank you for  
11                   your testimony and thank you for your  
12                   participation.

13                   **WITNESS:** Yes, sir.

14                               [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

15                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Next witness, Mr. Dong.

16                   **MR. DONG:** Stacy Parish

17                               [Witness affirmed]

18                   THEREUPON came,

19                               **S T A C Y   P A R I S H ,**

20                   who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

21                   **MR. RICHARDSON:** Please state your name and  
22                   address, for the record.

23                   **WITNESS:** my name is Stacy Parish, P-a-r-i-s-  
24                   h. My address is 9 Pepperwood Court, in the  
25                   Woodlake Subdivision in the Northeast area of

1 Columbia.

2 I want to thank you ladies and gentlemen for  
3 allowing us to speak tonight as behalf of the  
4 residents of Richland County. We moved into that  
5 house in 2013 and have already once incurred a rate  
6 increase. We were initially paying approximately  
7 \$22, then it increased to a rate of \$36.50.

8 We came from a neighborhood, being in the  
9 Summit, where our water and sewer were combined,  
10 based upon usage, to a neighborhood that is now –  
11 unbeknownst to us when we moved into the  
12 neighborhood – a separate bill. We did not know  
13 that we were going to be billed separately for our  
14 sewer usage until approximately a year later when  
15 we received a bill from Palmetto Utilities.  
16 Unfortunately, it's obvious that someone along the  
17 lines dropped the ball and told us that we would be  
18 billed separately for our sewer usage, so when we  
19 received that bill in excess of \$250, it had to be  
20 paid within the 30 days.

21 I made contact with Palmetto Utilities and  
22 inquired as to, you know, giving us some sort of  
23 concessions or helping us pay that sewer bill, and  
24 it was reiterated to me through customer service  
25 that that bill had to be paid by the due date or we

1 would incur various fees, being late fees or other  
2 additional fees being tacked on for the bill not  
3 being paid in full.

4 As it was previously stated in prior  
5 testimony, the average income in the Northeast area  
6 of our particular area is less than \$100,000 a  
7 year. Single family and a lot of fixed incomes in  
8 that area, as well. This increase is going to  
9 cause a financial hardship on a lot of families,  
10 forcing them to make sacrifices that they probably  
11 wouldn't normally make. I believe that, if there  
12 is going to be a rate increase, that it is the –  
13 that primary burden is put upon the builders who  
14 are needing to tap into services for Palmetto  
15 Utilities, and not put it on the burden of existing  
16 members. I also believe that sewer should be based  
17 upon usage, as it was with the City of Columbia.

18 We, as a single family of three, we don't even  
19 use sewer usage of \$36.50. Our water bill isn't  
20 even \$36. So proposing an increase of our sewer  
21 bill which will now become more than our water bill  
22 is asinine.

23 [3-minute bell]

24 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Go ahead, Ms. Parish.  
25 That's our timer, but go ahead.



1                   **WITNESS:** So I would just oppose the rate  
2                   increase, and I believe that it should be based  
3                   upon usage.

4                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Is that the end of your  
5                   testimony, Ms. Parish?

6                   **WITNESS:** Yes, sir.

7                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Okay. If you'll hold  
8                   with me just a second, let's see if there are any  
9                   questions.

10                  Mr. Hoefer.

11                  **MR. HOEFER:** Yes.

12                                 **CROSS EXAMINATION**

13 **BY MR. HOEFER:**

14 **Q**    Ms. Parish, what is your average monthly water bill with  
15           City of Columbia?

16 **A**    It varies, depending on how much we run our sprinkler  
17           system. We are not in a financial position to install a  
18           well. So on a good month, it's about \$25, and if we run  
19           our sprinkler system, it's obviously more.

20 **Q**    How much more?

21 **A**    Fifty dollars. It's usually double in the summertime.

22 **Q**    Thank you, so much, ma'am.

23 **A**    Yes, sir.

24                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Hoefer.

25                   Mr. Nelson, questions of this witness?

**CROSS EXAMINATION****BY MR. NELSON:**

**Q** Ms. Parish, did y'all get caught up with the bill, then?  
I mean, as we got the story in 2013 and all, did the  
company make you pay the \$250 and did you do that, then?

**A** We had to make other concessions to pay the bill, to  
avoid late fees and other fees that Palmetto Utilities  
was going to charges us, if we didn't pay that bill in  
full.

**Q** But you're caught up now, and you're not having any  
issues with them right now?

**A** No, sir.

**Q** Thank you, ma'am.

**A** Yes, sir.

**CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Nelson.

Commissioners, questions for Ms. Parish.

Commissioner Fleming.

**COMMISSIONER FLEMING:** Yes.

**EXAMINATION****BY COMMISSIONER FLEMING:**

**Q** I just wanted to better understand. So did you not  
receive a bill for a year?

**A** That is correct. When we bought the home, the realtor  
and the builder, nobody ever told us that it was going  
to be a separate bill for sewer, that we – we had to go

1 down to the City of Columbia to establish water  
2 services, and we received water bills and everything.  
3 Never received anything, never was told anything about  
4 having to establish services at Palmetto Utilities. I  
5 don't know who dropped the ball, as far as informing us,  
6 or what we were supposed to do as homeowners, but we  
7 never received a bill for – it was actually 13 months  
8 that we lived in that house and never received a sewer  
9 bill. And then when we did, it was in excess of \$250.

10 **Q** And they wanted it paid within a specified period?

11 **A** Within the 30-day bill period.

12 **Q** Even though you had not received a bill.

13 **A** That is correct, yes, ma'am.

14 **Q** Okay. Thank you. Well, I did – and I guess you did not  
15 call ORS about that?

16 **A** I wasn't aware of that even being an option.

17 **Q** Okay. Sounds like ORS is going to have to get the word  
18 out more?

19 **A** Yes, ma'am, because, you know, like I said, we came from  
20 a neighborhood where our water and sewer was combined,  
21 so we didn't know anything different. We didn't know  
22 that that was even the situation in the neighborhood  
23 that we reside in now.

24 **Q** So you just assumed the bill you were getting was for –

25 **A** Was for water and sewer.

1 Q Okay, thank you.

2 A Yes, ma'am.

3 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioner Howard, you  
4 have a question for Ms. Parish?

5 EXAMINATION

6 BY COMMISSIONER HOWARD:

7 Q Ms. Parish, do you know if Palmetto offers an irrigation  
8 rate?

9 A I am not sure if they do or not.

10 Q I would think that would – okay, never mind. Thank you.

11 A Yes, sir.

12 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioners, any other  
13 questions for Ms. Parish?

14 [No response]

15 Well, if not, Ms. Parish, thank you for your  
16 testimony and thank you for being here, and you may  
17 step down.

18 WITNESS: Thank you.

19 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

20 MR. DONG: Bakari Prioleau?

21 [Witness affirmed]

22 THEREUPON came,

23 B A K A R I P R I O L E A U ,

24 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

25 MR. RICHARDSON: State your full name and

1 address, for the record.

2 **WITNESS:** Good evening. My name is Bakari  
3 Prioleau, spelled B-a-k-a-r-i, last name P-r-i-o-l-  
4 e-a-u. I live at 216 Stormycreek Lane, Blythewood,  
5 South Carolina 29016. I'm also the treasurer of  
6 the Killian Station HOA. That's a previous  
7 property that my wife and I still own, that we use  
8 as a rental, which is about 10 minutes away from  
9 that location, the Blythewood location.

10 So we bought the house in 2015. It's our  
11 first home. The rate there was about \$25-\$27. And  
12 I'm just going to call Palmetto "Palmetto," just  
13 for brevity's sake. I deployed in 2016, from  
14 January to August 2016. The rate stayed about \$25.  
15 So I have question – I have reason to question that  
16 the rates are even billed correctly. I didn't live  
17 there. My wife wasn't there at the time. So the  
18 fact that the rate never decreased below that \$25  
19 amount gives me question and concern about whether  
20 the rates are even billed accurately. I wasn't  
21 there to flush the toilet, to run the sprinkler, or  
22 anything. So that's cause for concern.

23 Unlike some of the other testimony of fellow  
24 customers, I do agree that rate increases are  
25 warranted from time to time. Things change.

1 Administration costs change, et cetera, but to what  
2 degree? Right now, where we live in Blythewood,  
3 the proposed rate is \$68.05 as of a fixed amount.  
4 That's more than double what we pay, and that's  
5 absurd.

6 In the letter that we received, it didn't say  
7 anything about what the managerial costs or what  
8 the managerial processes are. If this is an  
9 insolvency issue, we need to address that. Is  
10 somebody being fired? Is someone being demoted?  
11 This rate increase is incredible, if you think  
12 about it. We're all here to attest to that.

13 The question has been asked about the quality  
14 of service. While that's warranted in some regard,  
15 that's not the point of this meeting. We're  
16 concerned about the rate increase.

17 So what are the options? Are there tiers for  
18 heavy rate users, are there tiers for people who –  
19 can't read my writing, I'm sorry. Are there tiers  
20 for people who have a more burdensome structural  
21 area? What are those options that are being  
22 explored so that people like myself, people like in  
23 this room, who can't bear that cost or have other  
24 concerns that they need to address fiscally, what's  
25 being done to alleviate those concerns?

1                   Lastly, the Notice I received said the bill  
2                   rate increase was to earn a reasonable rate return  
3                   – excuse me – reasonable return on its investment.  
4                   But public utilities are not profit centers, so the  
5                   rate of return is in what regard? Is it strictly  
6                   about profit, or is it about providing quality  
7                   service for basic usage?

8                   Thank you.

9                   **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Prioleau.  
10                  If you'll bear with us just a minute, I'll see if  
11                  there are any questions.

12                  Mr. Hoefer.

13                  **MR. HOEFER:** Just a few questions, Mr.  
14                  Chairman.

15                                   **CROSS EXAMINATION**

16                  **BY MR. HOEFER:**

17                  **Q**     It's Cpt. Prioleau, is it not?

18                  **A**     Prioleau, yes.

19                  **Q**     Prioleau. Thank you. Is 216 Stormycreek Lane, is that  
20                  your residence that you live in today?

21                  **A**     That is correct.

22                  **Q**     Okay. And you mentioned – is that in Killian Crossing?

23                  **A**     No, that's in Crickentree.

24                  **Q**     Crickentree.

25                  **A**     The previous address that we had, that we still have, we

1 still own and we use as a rental property, that's  
2 Killian Station.

3 Q At which location was the bill always \$25?

4 A That was an average amount, typically, and that's at the  
5 Killian Station location. I can give you that address.

6 Q Where you currently live?

7 A Negative. So, the previous address is 74 West Killian  
8 Station Court. That's where we used to live.

9 Q Okay.

10 A That's the area in which I referenced that cost.

11 Q And your service provider at – 74 West Killian Station  
12 Court, that's a rental unit now?

13 A Correct.

14 Q And your service provider for sewer at that location was  
15 Palmetto Utilities?

16 A Yes, sir.

17 Q And the rate was \$25?

18 A Average, yes.

19 Q And what year was this?

20 A 2015, up until we moved out of there, essentially, which  
21 we moved in November 2017. So it's around, averaging  
22 between \$25-\$28 a month.

23 Q Okay. And, currently, is that location – do you pay  
24 that bill or does your tenant pay that bill?

25 A No, the tenant now pays that bill. At our current



1 residence, our average is a little bit more because it's  
2 a bigger house and we have to actually use the  
3 sprinklers this time around, so it's averaging about  
4 \$33. But either way, it's a doublefold increase with  
5 the proposed standard rate that's being put out there.

6 **Q** Okay. So the 74 West Killian Station Court is a rental  
7 property.

8 **A** Correct.

9 **Q** And you're treasurer of the Killian Crossing Homeowners'  
10 Association?

11 **A** No, it's Killian Station Homeowners' Association.

12 **Q** Killian Station, I'm sorry.

13 **A** Correct.

14 **MR. HOEFER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No  
15 further questions.

16 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Okay, Mr. Hoefer.  
17 Mr. Nelson, questions for Mr. Prioleau?

18 **MR. NELSON:** No questions. Thank you,  
19 Captain.

20 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners?

21 [No response]

22 I don't hear any from Commissioners, and I  
23 don't really have any for you, either. I would  
24 offer to you, Cpt. Prioleau, it sounds like you  
25 also have a lot of questions, and I don't know if

1           you were in town to attend any of the public  
2           meetings that were referenced earlier that were  
3           held by the company that some of the other  
4           witnesses referenced, but I would certainly, again,  
5           remind you not only are the company officials here  
6           tonight but you also have the Office of Regulatory  
7           Staff, and maybe you can get some answers to your  
8           questions from either of those two tonight.

9           **WITNESS:** Yes, sir. I'll just add one final  
10          thing, that I do travel from time to time, so I get  
11          my bills electronically. I happened to get this  
12          one in the mail with the Notice, so the previous  
13          public hearings, I was not privy to or aware of.

14          **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Well, I certainly would,  
15          again, offer you Mr. Nelson from the South Carolina  
16          Office of Regulatory Staff, and the company as  
17          well, and I believe both have stated that they're  
18          willing to, of course, remain here after the  
19          meeting after the Commissioners are gone, and  
20          certainly answer your questions.

21          **WITNESS:** Thank you, sir.

22          **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you. You may step  
23          down.

24                               [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

25          **MR. DONG:** Reginald Randolph.

1 [Witness affirmed]

2 THEREUPON came,

3 R E G I N A R L R A N D O L P H ,

4 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

5 MR. RICHARDSON: Please state your name and  
6 address, for the record.

7 WITNESS: Good evening. My name is Reginarl  
8 Randolph. I reside at 120 Country Mill Road, and  
9 that is in 29229. That's in Chimney Ridge. It's  
10 off of Clemson Road.

11 I did rewrite a protest – letter of protest.  
12 I did some editing. I made some errors on it that  
13 I see now. Probably corrected them at that  
14 particular time. But I'm going to start from my  
15 first inquiry with Palmetto Utilities, which I  
16 received the Notice in the mail. Some rain damage  
17 now, but that's it [indicating].

18 But, anyway, Palmetto Utility industry had a  
19 community meeting to inform the need for a raise in  
20 the sewer in the Northeast Columbia area with  
21 installments of \$9.85 per month for three years.  
22 As of this increase, to \$68.05 for utility. There  
23 are many other increases that we pay for each day  
24 now. If this rate increase is granted, it would be  
25 very aggressive for Palmetto Utility customers, who

1 have different makes-up of income. All are not the  
2 same. Why are we here today with such a big  
3 request for sewer utility rate increase? That's  
4 looked like – and that's my omission – looked like  
5 for development, and I emphasize that. I meant to  
6 say "poor" and a lot of people are poor and I used  
7 that word for a wide range of things. Looked like  
8 poor development has run astray.

9 Now you must stop the development – and which  
10 I'm saying slow down the pace of development in our  
11 areas for overgrowth that is taking place in the  
12 Northeast area here in the State of South Carolina,  
13 as well. With the utility Savannah River Plant  
14 gone bust, you've got money there and they're  
15 trying to come up with an agreement there. This is  
16 not in my original statement, but this is just  
17 information that has come up to me. And this  
18 development and this increase is coming from an  
19 entity that Palmetto Utility took upon themselves  
20 to go to the City of Columbia and merge, and that  
21 is where this particular increase is coming on, and  
22 it said City of Columbia, Palmetto Richland County,  
23 and Palmetto Utility industry for this increase.

24 So I just feel that there's a lot of surface  
25 development in the area here today, that we are

1           experiencing, and not infrastructure that's going  
2           on to take care and maintain what you're trying to  
3           develop in this – at this particular time. So I  
4           think you just need to hold your hearts just a  
5           little bit, on development. I know it have to do –  
6           you have to have improvement, and it's great. But  
7           you've got to have the infrastructure to support  
8           these things, and now you're coming and ask the  
9           customers to foot a bill that is going to be an  
10          aggressive increase.

11           I'm on a fixed income. Everyone has cried  
12          fixed income, but I still yet try to be involved  
13          with the community in the Northeast, as well. So I  
14          hope you all will think before going forward with  
15          this increase. There's been other increases for  
16          the surface development that have taken place,  
17          because I know I've been back in my house since  
18          1990: \$22.50; from \$22.50 to \$27.50; from \$27.50 to  
19          \$32 – \$33; and now to \$36, which I pay for  
20          utilities. So you've had adequate enough increases  
21          for the surface development in the area that has  
22          taken place, here. And that's my testimony.

23           **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Randolph.  
24           Mr. Hoefer?

25           **MR. HOEFER:** No questions for Mr. Randolph,

1 Mr. Chairman.

2 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Mr. Nelson, any questions  
3 for Mr. Randolph?

4 MR. NELSON: No questions. Thank you, Mr.  
5 Randolph.

6 WITNESS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioners, questions  
8 for Mr. Randolph?

9 [No response]

10 Well, hearing none, Mr. Randolph, thank you  
11 for your testimony, and thank you for being here  
12 and participating. And you may step down.

13 WITNESS: Thank you for listening to me  
14 tonight.

15 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Yes, sir. Thank you.

16 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

17 MR. DONG: The last witness on the list is  
18 Paul<sub>[sic]</sub> Brown

19 [Witness affirmed]

20 THEREUPON came,

21 P A R I S H B R O W N ,  
22 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

23 MR. RICHARDSON: Please state your full name  
24 and address, for the record.

25 WITNESS: Good evening, everyone, and thank

1           you for this opportunity to address you all. My  
2           name is Parish – P-a-r-i-s-h – Brown. Parish  
3           Brown.

4           I'm always concerned when I feel somewhat  
5           violated by corporations. I'm concerned because  
6           this is something that is not seemingly out of  
7           necessity but out of a desire and want. I'm  
8           concerned because you're asking for an 86 percent  
9           increase in a monthly fee, and I'm also concerned  
10          about how that's going to affect low-income homes,  
11          our seniors, single-parent homes, persons who  
12          simply can't afford this increase. And it disturbs  
13          me that corporations would take upon themselves to  
14          propose and interject these projects upon persons  
15          who have no input, no say-so as to how these things  
16          manifest, and then expect us to pay for it. I  
17          think that's wanton. I think it's irresponsible.  
18          I think it's unfair that you would impose that upon  
19          us.

20          And I'm not speaking for myself; I'm speaking  
21          for persons in my community. I live in the  
22          Carolina Lakes area of Northeast Columbia. I live  
23          at 331 Pinnacle Ridge Drive. My wife and I have  
24          lived there; we've not been completely pleased with  
25          our service. We had some issues in the beginning.

1 I believe it was Ms. Parish who said she had some  
2 issues about billing, things of that nature. We  
3 had those same type issues. So, again, we're not  
4 completely pleased with the service.

5 And we do understand that there need be  
6 increases, that there need be development and  
7 things of that nature. But for corporations to get  
8 together and to determine that they want to impose  
9 upon us an unfair – and, again, I say unfair –  
10 substantial increase, I think that is unfair.  
11 Again, I think it's reckless. I think it's  
12 irresponsible. And I really hope that you all  
13 reconsider.

14 It's an \$80 million project, and it's not a  
15 little bit of money. And we're going to be held  
16 accountable monthly to something that we had no  
17 input, we had no conversation concerning. And,  
18 again, I just think it's very unfair to a lot of  
19 persons who are going to suffer. There are persons  
20 who have fixed incomes, medication; they're going  
21 to have to make decisions between medications or  
22 water, or service that they should get based upon  
23 just the simple needs. Sewage and water are needs.  
24 And I am very disappointed that this has been  
25 imposed upon us. I'm very disappointed that,



1 again, corporations have yet determined how they're  
2 going to manage our monies and make decisions for  
3 us. I'm really disappointed that we even have to  
4 have a meeting of this magnitude where we really  
5 don't have input. Yeah, you're hearing our voices,  
6 but are we really being heard? That's my question  
7 to you all.

8 I'm just disappointed that we have to incur  
9 such inconvenience at the risk of other persons'  
10 irresponsibility. It's just unfair, and I don't  
11 think it should happen. I don't think it should be  
12 any kind of phasing-in paying. The rate is \$36.50  
13 now. My wife and I, we're the only persons in our  
14 home. We don't utilize that much of sewage; we  
15 don't utilize that much water.

16 So, again, persons will be affected greatly by  
17 this, and I really think – I hope that you all  
18 would seriously take into consideration how this is  
19 going to affect persons financially and in their  
20 lifestyles. Again, I would hate to be a person  
21 who's on a fixed income and who has to make a  
22 determination about my medications or my services.

23 And that's my testimony. Thank you all for  
24 allowing me this time.

25 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Brown.

1 Mr. Hoefer, any questions for Mr. Brown?

2 MR. HOEFER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

3 CROSS EXAMINATION

4 BY MR. HOEFER:

5 Q Mr. Brown, did you say your address was 331 Pinnacle  
6 Ridge Drive?

7 A Yes, sir.

8 Q And what subdivision is that?

9 A That is the Pinnacle Ridge – pardon me. That's Lake  
10 Carolina. It's the Pinnacle Ridge section of Lake  
11 Carolina.

12 Q Okay. And how long have you lived there?

13 A We've been there two years.

14 Q Okay. And you get your water from City of Columbia?  
15 What's your average water bill?

16 A Average water bill runs between \$22-\$25. And that's me  
17 being frugal, not utilizing my – my wife is chuckling –  
18 not utilizing our, what do you call that thing, the  
19 system? The sprinkler system. The word didn't come to  
20 mind.

21 Q Thank you, sir.

22 A You're welcome.

23 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Mr. Nelson, questions for  
24 Mr. Brown?

25 MR. NELSON: No questions, but thank you, Mr.

1 Brown.

2 WITNESS: Sure.

3 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioners, questions  
4 of Mr. Brown. Commissioner Fleming.

5 EXAMINATION

6 BY COMMISSIONER FLEMING:

7 Q Good evening.

8 A Good evening.

9 Q You mentioned that you had billing problems in the  
10 beginning?

11 A Yes, ma'am.

12 Q Were they delayed?

13 A Yes, ma'am, they were.

14 Q It was delayed?

15 A It was the same situation as Ms. Parish explained  
16 earlier. We had no knowledge of, upon purchasing the  
17 home, that there would be separate bills. Where we  
18 lived before, they were combined. And upon them finally  
19 realizing that there was a resident in it – as I  
20 understand, the home was not lived in for probably five  
21 or six months – no, maybe it was a year and a half.  
22 Eventually, they did realize that there was someone  
23 there, and I think we wound up having to pay a bill of  
24 \$100-and-some-odd. It wasn't extremely exorbitant,  
25 before they realized, but it was a delay, and they did

1 ask for it to be paid in full within a certain period of  
2 time.

3 **Q** So, all right. All right, well, that's good  
4 information. Thank you.

5 **A** Yes, ma'am.

6 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Commissioner  
7 Fleming.

8 Commissioners, any other Commissioner  
9 questions for Mr. Brown?

10 [No response]

11 Well, hearing none, Mr. Brown, thank you again  
12 for your testimony and for participating, and we  
13 appreciate you being here, and you may step down.

14 **WITNESS:** Thank you, sir.

15 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

16 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Dong?

17 [Brief pause]

18 Mr. Dong informs me that is the last witness  
19 that has signed up. Is there anything further from  
20 the parties, from the company or from ORS?

21 **MR. HOEFER:** Mr. Chairman, thank you. I just  
22 would like to reiterate that the company personnel  
23 are going to remain after the meeting, and we'd  
24 invite questions from any of the customers about  
25 any of the topics that have been mentioned, or any

1 other topics that are on their mind. Thank you,  
2 Mr. Chairman.

3 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** So noted, Mr. Hoefer.

4 And please feel free to seek him or company  
5 officials out.

6 Mr. Nelson?

7 **MR. NELSON:** Nothing, other than to add, Mr.  
8 Chairman, the same goes for us, obviously, myself,  
9 Mr. Morgan, and Mr. Seaman-Huynh.

10 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Nelson, if you don't  
11 mind, could you get to a mic just a little bit? I  
12 don't know if some of them might not be able to  
13 hear you.

14 **MR. NELSON:** [Indicating.] If you need to talk  
15 to us, we're here. We'll sit right up here. If  
16 anybody wants to come up, we'll be happy to talk to  
17 you. Thank you.

18 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Well, since there's  
19 nothing further, I would like to thank all of you  
20 for participating and for your testimonies. Your  
21 testimonies will go into the record. Our court  
22 reporter has taken it in and the transcript will be  
23 there. And the merits hearing in this case will be  
24 Wednesday, the 17th, and this hearing is now  
25 adjourned.

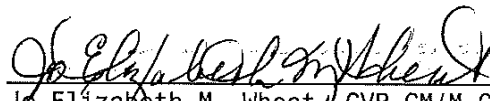
1 [WHEREUPON, at 7:55 p.m., the hearing in  
2 the above-entitled matter was adjourned.]

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 [WHEREUPON, Hearing Exhibit No. 1 was  
5 marked and received in evidence.]  
6 \_\_\_\_\_

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM-GNSC, do hereby certify that the foregoing is, to the best of my skill and ability, a true and correct transcript of all the proceedings had and testimony adduced in a hearing held before THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA in Columbia, South Carolina, according to my verbatim record of same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand, on this the 16<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2018.

  
Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM/M-GNSC  
Hearings Reporter, PSC/SC  
My Commission Expires: January 27, 2021.